

## **Tribute to Betty Fowler**

### **By Richard Van Wagoner**

Each age has its fabled men and women, people who achieve a lifetime of accomplishment that seems beyond the rest of us. And of those who do become legendary in their various spheres, we remember best those who influenced us the most. That is why Betty Fowler, long-time Lehi institution, has written herself into our hearts these past twenty-two years with cozy intimate tales of family, friends, and Lehi life.

Although we knew she was well past retirement age, some of us thought that perhaps her announcement was one of her elaborate April Fools' pranks. Sadly, this is not so. Betty, is really retreating to a life of rustication, although I doubt her rocking-chair will get much use.

Betty has always been a fountain of effervesce. That twinkle in her eye, promising a witty drollery, is just as visible today as it was forty years ago when I first met her. And with her down-home sensibilities and sure observations she could have been Ann Landers if Eppe Lederer hadn't already occupied that position. While we all pay tribute to you Betty, this is mine and your daughter Donna's special version of "This is Your Life."

Rebecca Ann Laursen, was born and educated in American Fork. When she married Lehi man Don Fowler, she moved here, where she has spent a lifetime raising nine active children, including two sets of twins.

Betty's love of literature and writing are rooted in her childhood. Both parents were book lovers. On cold, dreary nights during the Depression's darkest hours her father Bill recited poetry to his family. Betty committed to memory such epics as "Little Orphan Annie" and "The Congo".

Well-read and possessing an infectious sense of humor, Betty became a popular book reviewer at literary club and Relief Society meetings. Her critiques of Erma Bombeck's works and portrayals of U.S. presidents were among her favored presentations.

It did not take long for Betty's writing talents to be discovered. She wrote roadshow scripts and narration for numerous church and community programs. One of her favorite endeavors was narrating Christmas programs performed by the HiLos, a group of local women vocalists. She was an integral part of this group for many years.

Her writing skills and charisma resulted in her being hired by Russ Innes, publisher of the "Lehi Free Press". Assuming the duties of Margaret McMillan, Betty made her journalistic debut in 1971. McMillan, who since 1948 had served as the paper's society reporter, loved to write up Federated Women's Club news, weddings, funerals, and other local activities. She was not particularly enthusiastic about sports and was rarely seen at athletic events.

Betty, on the other hand, raised a large family of athletically inclined children, and has been a prominent booster of Lehi High School extracurricular activities. Her rabid zeal for the Purple and White is renowned.

Betty's byline, "Up and Down Main Street" first appeared in the "Lehi Free Press" on February 3, 1972. The caption became "You Better Believe It" on September 20, 1973. For those who like the detail and precision of mathematics, I calculate that Betty has written exactly 1100 feature columns, in her twenty-one year career. That, plus the thousands of general news items she has penned, is a prodigious feat for any writer.

Numerous writing awards have come Betty's way. The Utah Women's Press Association honored her with a first-place prize for her feature stories. She

also has garnered several other first-place awards from the Utah Press Association for her weekly column, "You Better Believe It."

Betty's writing material is gleaned from her girlhood experiences during the Depression, along with the trials and joys of being a wife and mother. Her down-to-earth humor and unaffected manner of delineating life in Lehi have won her a substantial following of "You Better Believe It" fans who eagerly await the weekly delivery of their "Lehi Free Press."

Betty has been an active civic and education-minded citizen. She, along with JoAnn Brown, city councilwoman, and Dale Price, committee chairperson, were members of Lehi's Bicentennial Committee. Bandwagon Park resulted from their efforts. Selected as Grand Marshal of the Lehi Roundup parade a few years ago, Betty has also been recognized by the high school as an honorary alumnus because of her untiring support of Lehi High School activities.

She also had several daughter in the local 4-8 program and served as supervisor in the organization for five years. Unbeknown to many, she is probably the only female in Lehi to serve as scoutmaster, albeit temporarily. A bunch of rowdy Troop 2 boys drove their leader into early retirement. Scoutmistress Fowler stepped in and performed yeoman service until a male replacement could be secured.

Betty Fowler's newspaper writing is an outgrowth of her desire to proclaim Lehi's virtues to its citizenry. When asked why she didn't retire when she reached sixty-five, she emphatically answered: Where will they find someone who cares as much about Lehi as I do !" That's a question we all ponder now. Betty, we dearly love you. Thank you for sharing your life with us these past two decades. You better believe we are all going to miss sitting down to breakfast with you every Wednesday morning. God Bless.